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The Commonweal

October 7, 1949

The Atheist Mind

Jean C. de Menasce

Growing into World Order

James Rorty

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by **JOHN F. ANDERSON**

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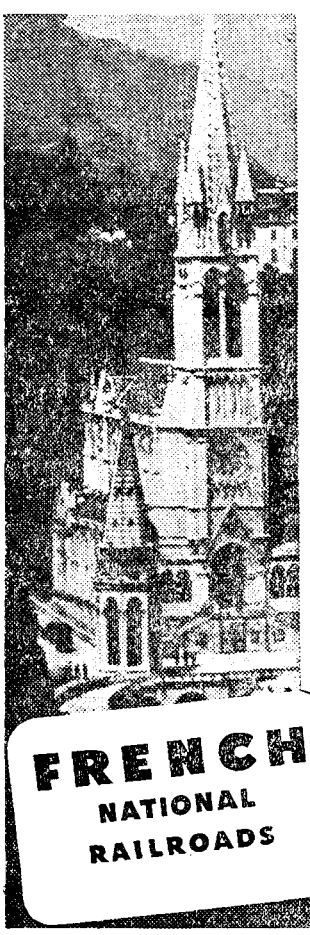

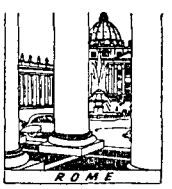

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The
COMMONWEAL

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Making Little Ones Out of Big Ones

THE Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company has demanded in bold and forceful full-page advertisements: "Do you want your A & P put out of business?" It is a rough question, and if a rough answer is really requested, we are forced to an all-in-all and highly hedged—Yes.

"The anti-trust lawyers from Washington," as the A & P public relations officer calls the Justice Department, want our A & P to separate the processing units of the mammoth grocery store from the selling units. "Ann Page," "Jane Parker," all the coffee, and presumably the tea itself, would have to fend for themselves in a competitive world. And the stores also would be divided up, with seven retail chains replacing the big one.

This is surely a rude suggestion of the government, but our A & P has no genuine reason for the terribly hurt tone of the advertisements. The Anti-trust Division is similarly harassing our Du-Pont company, our General Motors, our U. S. Rubber, our Aluminum Co. of America, American Can, Yellow Cab, our A. T. & T., and many of our other biggest properties. It is true that more of us are better acquainted with the A & P than is the case with most of the A & P's economic peers. Housewives know that there are practically innumerable A & P stores, and that they are good stores and cheap and efficient and that very good men work in them ("our 110,000 loyal employees").

"Do You Want Higher Prices?" the publicity experts asks us. That is certainly putting the screws on. In the strictest context of the present American economic system, we are willing to suppose this is a legitimate question. Nevertheless, our answer is yes; and we do not believe it is masochistic or nobly sacrificial to do so: "There is much more involved in this case than the future of A & P," the ad tells us, and we accept that unequivocally.

The current fact and tendency of the American economy makes for doing our job by means of giant concentration. The method has been very effective up to a point. But it is simply a meaningless truism to say that within an economy designed for large-scale, concentrated business units, a very large and concentrated and capably managed business enterprise flourishes with all the fruits which the given economy is designed to produce. We deny the social, political, cultural, biological, as well as over-all economic, superiority of the current big-concentration type of economy. There are many reasons which are hard to dramatize as clearly as the A & P can do for its story. (Once again, we are conditioned in their terms.)

Chairman Celler of the House Judiciary Committee summed up several points in an interview last week, which at least counterbalanced the A & P ads: "There are two main reasons why I am concerned with the concentration of economic power in the United States. One is that concentration of business unavoidably leads to some kind of socialism, which is not the desire of the American people. The other is that a concentrated system is inefficient in the long run, compared with a system of free competition." We wish there were slogans rising more directly from the individual, personal condition. They should ignite our will and passion to throw off the smothering burden of our assembly line, red tape, dependence, and open the way toward independent freedom to work in an open world for things we know are worth the work.

Gunning for the Farm Vote

THE TWO-DAY Sioux City meeting has called national attention to the fact that the Republican Party is going after the 1950 midwest farm vote with a vengeance. Despite crucial and unexpected support for Mr. Truman last time, the area is traditionally Republican. Some weeks after

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the Democrats had set off the fireworks in Des Moines and at the very moment Messrs. Brannan, Tobin et al, having moved on, were promising more water, more power and more jobs to the eleven states farther west, the Republican drive for rural votes began.

In order to compete with the Brannan "partners in prosperity" plan, which would assure workers low food costs by having the Government pay the farmer the difference between parity prices and what he actually gets for his produce on a free market, the Republicans declare that they do not plan to out-promise their rivals. That would be virtually impossible anyway. Instead, they are pinning their hopes on a program based on the farmer's speaking his own mind.

One difficulty with such a foundation for a program is that farmers are not agreed among themselves. They are, by the nature of their calling, individualists. There is wide disparity between producers of different crops. Needs and traditions vary widely in various geographical areas, under varying soil and climatic conditions, for large-scale and small-scale cultivators and for one-crop and diversified farming. The interests of livestock raisers often run counter of those of grain producers.

YET the Sioux City conference did indicate that on certain dislikes there was some agreement. Farmers do not like low prices for their produce (perhaps even when the Department of Agriculture and the Treasury Department make it up to them later.) They do not like certain aspects of production and marketing controls. They do not like the prospect of numbers of government inspectors, who would verify their accounting under some version of the Brannan plan. They do not like such things, but might be willing to stomach them if nothing better is proposed to stabilize their present prosperity.

Thus far the Republicans seem to be leaning toward a gentle modification of the system now in force. What ideas they have expressed are not far from the provisions of the bipartisan Anderson-Aiken Bill which would shift present commodity supports from the present 90 percent of parity level to a sliding scale of 75 to 90 percent (rather than the 100 percent parity now embodied in the Brannan plan, or the 60 to 90 percent scale which is slated to go into effect January 1, barring the enactment of some countermanding legislation).

There are also indications that the Republicans would seek to continue and intensify the present emphasis on soil conservation and call once again for new uses for farm products. This time they might promise state and federal assistance for technical studies of this problem, if they listen to the pleas of their prospective rural constituents. And they might again promise recourse to the tariff arm to assure foreign outlets and protected domestic markets.

Add this all up and it would seem that despite their express determination to be affirmative in their approach, the main appeal of the Republicans will be a negative one. Although the nation's farmers realize that before long the great bulk of the citizenry will rebel against paying taxes to keep their food costs at the current unprecedented peace-time levels, they want to keep as much of the present set-up as possible. For them the main issue of the election will be whether or not for their continued prosperity the present complex pattern should yield to an altogether new degree of centralization.

The Church in Czechoslovakia

THE Pope said last week that when the Church fights to preserve her own freedom, she also fights for the essential rights of man. The most essential right of man is the right to know and love God. The political rights that are asserted in the West and contested in the East are ramifications of this one fact of man's existence. To be able properly to exercise that personal, interior right, a man must have certain political and social guarantees.

The opposition the Church has had to Communism and Nazism has been on these philosophical grounds, but the conflict has had tremendous political effect.

Much of the strength of the Church in its fight with the Communist government of Czechoslovakia (speaking of the area where the battle has been heaviest in recent days) is in the Church's existence as a human institution. It is no longer the unspoken struggle with the state claiming more and more of the functions and authority of the Church as properly political; it is now simply an open direct attack with the Church named as a "foreign hostile power."

The Secretary of Archbishop Matocha (the second-ranking prelate) has been sent to prison for ten years, charged with "high treason," and the Archbishop is reported under close police surveillance. Two hundred priests are estimated to be under arrest, and when the new law that will make the appointment and financial support of clerics a state function goes into operation, the number arrested for adherence to this "foreign hostile power" will undoubtedly be high indeed.

As long as the Church continues to exist in Eastern Europe, there remain things that are not Caesar's. There remains a single independent institution in the Communist countries which asserts the right of man to live as an individual before God. That is sufficient reason for the West's interest, and that is more than enough reason for the Czech government's energetic persecution.

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Nothing Has Changed

SINCE AMERICAN post-war foreign policy has gone on the assumption that other nations would one day have atomic bombs, the prevailing official response to the news that Russia had set off an atomic explosion was that "nothing in our policy has changed." While public reaction to the news was similarly unemotional, there was at least a suspicion that in one or two ways things *have* changed.

It is now, for instance, no longer possible to believe in "the secret," in our monopoly of atomic power. It does make a difference when a secret is shared: in this case, it makes atomic war between Russia and the United States a possibility.

Against that possibility we have put our hope in a plan for international control of atomic energy. Now, when the possibility of atomic war is a reality, we are without international control. The "sense of insecurity" is everywhere multiplied. Insecurity makes "one world" of us.

It is logical that, after President Truman released the news, most public officials turned with renewed urgency to the United Nations as the only refuge for an insecure one-world. There, however, the long wrangle between Russia and the United States over atomic energy seems insoluble. There is an underlying impression that their differences, derived from irreconcilable philosophies of life, are in themselves irreconcilable.

Out of all this, the most hopeful prospect seemed to be that, since the new balance of atomic power is so fearful, man will tacitly agree not to destroy himself. He will, in other words, live in a brotherhood of fear. Fear, a passion which has more than once possessed man and carried him to violence, is not really a prospect for security that one can believe in, when the whole record of human experience is that men live together peacefully only in terms of mutual respect and love. In this sense, more than any other, it is true that "nothing has changed."

While it might be pleasant to believe that the United Nations is now man's refuge in his atomic insecurity, it is more likely an illusory hope. Already, as Ernest Bevin recently told the Assembly, the UN has set for itself ambitions too large and sweeping to realize. He believes that it will grow, as things have a habit of growing, a little at a time.

It is not too much to hope that in the same manner an understanding will come about between Russia and the United States as a result of our current policy. If, as a hope, this seems altogether too slow for an atomic world which cannot wait for its own salvation, then it would seem that we have first to find a serum by which virtue can be shot into the human heart and head, which have known for a long time that not everyone who cries "Lord, Lord" will be saved.

The Courage of Finland

WITH the threat of Communist-inspired strikes subsiding (in some measure, perhaps, because the Finnish Comrades called them on their own initiative) independent Finland bravely faces another arduous winter. She has lost important strategic areas to the towering USSR, struggles under a heavy Russian reparations burden and is bound and trussed by one of those Kremlin treaties of "Friendship and Mutual Assistance." At present Finland is also harassed by serious unemployment. Yet observers note her remarkable economic recovery and she continues to hold her head high.

Her Communists have continued to decline since the reins of power slipped from their grasp in the elections of July, 1948. At present they are losing out in their last remaining stronghold: the labor unions. Yet all this has been proceeding as it would in a freely-elected democracy such as ours; no police-state guards protect the intrepid leaders of the Fagerholm government in their continued assertion of their nation's independence. Other threatened peoples might take heart from the indomitable courage of the Finns whose native self-reliance puts to shame those who trust in "bigness" for their strength.

Unemployment, and Where?

THE Bureau of Labor Statistics published the happy news that during the month ending August 15, unemployment went down 500,000; and the trend is believed to be continuing in the same direction. America's recession this year attacked different areas quite differently. The government considered regions where unemployment reached 12 percent to be "critical areas." Such areas have been shrinking. The recovery of the textile and apparel industry (workers up 140,000) was probably the principal factor in reducing the distress.

Presidential assistant Steelman claims also that, "informal and preliminary reports indicate" that federal contract, construction and loan policies are benefiting some bad regions. With the government buying and building and lending on the present vast scale, the direction of its activity to special areas can have considerable effect. This is certainly a good consequence of planning and of national economic effort. It is also enormously complicating, and makes the economy still more delicately synthetic. Carried on at length it must force further planning to govern the technological development of the areas affected, their shifts of population and changes in business investment. In any case, the avoidance of unemployment is a good yardstick to measure efforts.

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Growing into World Order

The UN Resources Conference and what it could lead to

James Rorty

THAT the United Nations Scientific Conference on the Conservation and Utilization of Resources was held at all was its most important achievement. Once the decision to hold it was made, it could not wholly fail. Nor did it, even after all the discounts are entered, all the evasions acknowledged.

Over five hundred scientists and technologists came from 44 countries to attend three weeks of crowded meetings at Lake Success, ending September 6. Section conferences were held on Land, Water, Fuels and Energy, Forests, Minerals, Wild Life and Fish. The data presented in the Land, Forests, Wild Life and Fish sections proved that the population of the earth can be fed and fed well, if—. The Fuels and Energy and Water sections proved that a global extension of our technological civilization could be fueled and powered, if—. The Minerals section proved that despite some alarming shortages of critical metals, the resources of science and technology can apparently extend the supply or provide satisfactory substitutes almost indefinitely, if—.

The "ifs," of course, are economic, social, demographic and political.

If only because of its unprecedented scope, the conference was bound to open breath-taking vistas. Before it was over most, if not all, of the delegates shared the kind of wonder and excitement that accompanies participation in events the significance of which is felt rather than expressed— especially not by scientists, for whom the avoidance of rhetorical excesses is instinctive and habitual.

What happened was that the potential of our technological civilization was suddenly moved up to its proper and necessary scale, which is the global scale. With that shift one felt a great surge of new power and—although more faintly —of new hope.

All the natural and technological resources, with the notable exception of atomic power, were represented and described at the conference. As the mind-stretching process of coordination and synthesis spread from the section meetings to the concluding plenary sessions, one saw that the riches of the earth are indeed great, if also greatly squandered, and that man himself is no mean thing but a creator and a craftsman gifted beyond measure.

After which tribute, owed both to the organizers of the conference and to all of its participants, one is equally obligated to append a list of sobering qualifications:

Not all the countries of the world were represented. The Russians and their satellites, after trying vainly in the preliminary discussions to sterilize the program beyond the point of serious usefulness, boycotted the conference, although the Poles and the Czechs sent papers. Hence no inventory of the world's resources—its natural resources of soil, fuels, minerals, waterpower, forests, and its scientific and technological resources of knowledge, skills and inventions—could even be attempted.

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THE natural scientists, the engineers, and a few administrators were there but the social scientists and the politicians were not there, except as stowaways. Hence the conference limped like a crippled giant from start to finish —although it might be argued that but for these limitations it could not even have started.

Some of the organizers of the conference had argued vainly that the natural scientists and technologists be asked to add to their descriptions of the resources in which they specialized some appraisal of what it would cost to utilize them and what benefits might be expected from their use. This would have supplied in part the missing economic dimensions of the ecological, or natural resources, complex. Others had insisted that the population problem be brought in by the front door, since it would enter by the window anyway—as it did on the first day in the speech of the Australian, Colin Clark.

Another frightening skeleton was atomic power, which *was* kept locked in the closet by an heroic exercise of discretion on the part of everybody concerned. The consequence, however, was that the Fuels and Energy Section was obliged to play its "to be or not to be" scenes without Hamlet, so to speak; it spoiled what otherwise might have been one of the best shows of the conference.

For better or worse the conference was de-

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liberately planned and conducted *so far as possible* in a political vacuum. The delegates represented nobody but themselves. No discussion of the political potentials and limitations of resource programs was theoretically in order, although this official limitation was rather frankly tossed out in the concluding discussions.

Here, then, were the priests of science and here were the treasures of the temple. But no "come and get it" call was trumpeted to the nations. No continuations committee was appointed, no clearing houses were established, and no resolutions were entertained.

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THESE planned omissions stirred the scorn of one of the conference's comparatively few lay delegates: Mrs. Gifford Pinchot, widow of America's pioneer forester. Mrs. Pinchot, who used to sign her passports "housewife and politician," is also a conservationist in her own right, with a substantial record of public service, dating from the political birth of the conservation movement under the first Roosevelt.

The conference, said Mrs. Pinchot, was regarded by many conservationists less as a dream come true than as a noble opportunity sidestepped. After which remark she proceeded to supply some of the background of history and politics that the conference had hitherto lacked.

In 1908 Theodore Roosevelt called a conference of Governors that anticipated by forty-three years the global synthesis, in terms of the inter-relationship between men and natural resources, which the present conference was attempting.

"The protection, preservation and wise use of the natural resources of the earth," affirmed the Governors, "are not a series of separate and independent tasks but one single problem . . . so closely connected that they should be coordinated and treated as part of one coherent plan."

A year later, in January, 1909, TR issued a formal invitation to 58 nations to "join together in conferences on the subject of world resources and their inventory, conservation and wise utilization." Some 30 of the invited nations accepted, but the invitation was later recalled by TR's successor, William Howard Taft. Wilson, Harding and Hoover also failed to renew the initiative of the first Roosevelt, despite pressure from the conservationists. It was 30 years later before the inventory and utilization of resources was again projected as the essential catalyst of peace and global construction.

In 1940 Gifford Pinchot induced the Eighth American Scientific Conference to call for the appointment of an Inter-American Conservation Commission, charged with the task of inventorying world resources and programming their utilization. Four years later Pinchot won the backing of Franklin D. Roosevelt for the same project, which President Truman inherited. The Preparatory Commission was headed by the highly competent geographer, Carter Goodrich of Columbia. But when, after three years of work, the program of the conference was finally announced, it appeared that, paradoxically enough, considerations of political expediency had been invoked to sterilize the political potential of the conference.

To Mrs. Pinchot it seemed both amazing and tragic to exclude Man himself from the conference; to sidestep the human and political implications of conservation; to deal with it exclusively in terms of materials, matter and technical processes; to deprive the conference of policy—naming responsibilities and to veto in advance the formulation of recommendations to governments.

"What upside-down Humpty Dumpty nonsense is this?" she exclaimed. "I should like to ask Mr. Trygve Lie since when have scientists become so dangerous that they are not to be trusted even with the little power implied in the making of a resolution? What lack of faith in the creative mechanisms of democracy is responsible for this implied prohibition to function in the field of policy making?"

Almost any conference benefits when a monkey wrench is tossed into the machinery, especially if it is not planned in advance. This one was no exception, as even some of its bruised and ruffled organizers were obliged to admit later.

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WHAT HAPPENED was that both organizers and delegates scrambled to pick up the apples spilled on the conference floor by Mrs. Pinchot's interpolation. Some of them did rather well and others rather badly; in both cases the effect was to dissipate the polite fiction that it is possible to hold an international resource conference in a political vacuum. The officially-imposed limitations of the conference remained, but unofficially, both in the lounges and in the speeches and discussions at the concluding plenary sessions, the conference came alive, after what had been a rather slow and inhibited start.

Press coverage, which had dropped to a stick or two, jumped back to a column or more. Some of the organizers of the conference proved that they were neither as inept nor as time-serving as Mrs. Pinchot's observations might have implied. Some of the delegates proved that they were politically sophisticated world citizens as well as scientists and engineers.

Not that the facts of international life were changed, as the UN secretariat knows them. But

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they were at least acknowledged. Nobody pretended that the wise men of science, after having come from the ends of the earth to pool their wisdom, would on their return be able to extract the New Jerusalem from their little black brief cases. Maybe their politicians wouldn't let them, as Stephen Raushenbush, himself a member of the Preparatory Committee, pointed out from the floor.

The delegates obviously enjoyed this and a subsequent interpolation by John Edelman, Secretary of the CIO Legislative Subcommittee on Conservation. Mr. Edelman put his finger on the limiting factor of communication and called for a vast program of mass education that would "plunge conservation into the cockpit of political controversy."

During the plenary sessions of the last day everybody talked politics and little else, both from the floor and from the platform. One of the ablest contributors to this free-for-all was William Borberg, permanent representative of Denmark to the United Nations, who served as chairman of the morning session.

The delegates, said Mr. Borberg, should congratulate themselves that as scientists, rather than politicians, they were free men, as he was not. As a permanent UN representative of his country, he was not free to violate the official injunction to refrain from the discussion of policy. On the other hand, as a diplomat and as a German, observed Mr. Borberg saltily, he should have little difficult in circumventing this prohibition.

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IF the delegates had come as representatives of their governments they could have taught little and learned little. And when it came to passing resolutions they would have been obliged yawningly to put their signatures to pious generalizations that expressed the lowest common denominator of the available political intelligence and consent.

Instead, continued Mr. Borberg, the participants had assembled, in the papers and discussions of this *first* international conference on the conservation and utilization of resources, a body of knowledge on which the whole world would draw for many years. In the section meetings they had repaired, to some degree, the fabric of international scientific exchange, torn and interrupted by the war. This was in itself "technical assistance" as envisaged in President Truman's Point 4 program.

The international organization of science is itself a scientific problem—a project for the social scientists. The conference had established growing points of discussion that must ultimately lead to action, including political action.

Mr. Borberg could scarcely have made his hint any broader. When coupled with Trygve Lie's reference to "this, the *first* international conference on resources," the suggestion was clearly that a succession of conferences be held in which the social scientists *would* be included and in which matters of policy would be discussed.

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ALTHOUGH our world inventory of natural and technological resources is still defective —largely because of the abstention of the Russians—enough is now in hand to provide the basis of discussion for a world conference of social scientists, again convened as individuals composing an international scientific estate. A world power conference is already scheduled. An international conference on River Basin Development will be very much in order following the completion of the Near East survey now being conducted by Gordon R. Clapp, chairman of the Tennessee Valley Authority. Some of the Indonesian delegates believe that a regional conference on the resources of the Pacific Basin should be held as quickly as the political preconditions of its organization can be fulfilled. While the delegates to the Resource Conference were packing their bags to go home, there came news that delegates from 47 nations had met in Paris, under the auspices of UNESCO, to form an International Association for Political Science.

By the vigorous cultivation of these and other growing points the Economic and Social Council of the UN can and should add many cubits to its stature—with or without the help of the totalitarian bloc. The Economic and Social Council is already a very much better and more powerful organization than it started out to be. By subjecting more and more the development and ordering of the modern world to the arbitrament of science, rather than politics, the ESC could and should progressively displace the activities of the Security Council. Indeed it must do just that, if the UN is to do anything much more than modulate the progression into World War III.

Admittedly, this is a rather optimistic perspective. But Mr. Borberg's growing points are real enough. All that is needed to develop them is a little brains and a little courage in high places. This, and perhaps one thing more: a press. What happened at Lake Success during the three weeks of the conference could, if adequately told and interpreted, change for the better the social and political climate of our slowly freezing world. But the press section was almost empty during most of the sessions. New York read a little about the conference, San Francisco much less, Moscow nothing, or nothing true. Is it possible that the bottleneck of survival in the modern world is not science but communication? Well, that is another story.

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The Atheist Mind

Some of its manifestations and underlying motives

Jean C. de Menasce

ALL the great truths of Christianity—the profundity of God's being, Eternity, man's destiny—are free gifts which a Christian receives, even if his intellect has never been disciplined to the point of fatigue in the art of discerning the true from the false. All is given, even though the gift has not been preceded by agonies of doubt.

Everything is given and no one can glorify himself; everything is received and the Prometheus in each of us retreats, tail between legs, because he cannot steal God, because God has already given Himself.

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OUR modern intellectual is more promethean, more mountain-climber, than intellectual. He prefers the athletic efforts of research to the quiet contemplation and possession of truth. He is aware of all that is required of an intellect in the way of preliminary gymnastics, of the purifications which must take place, before venturing into the search for truth. He knows all about the mental equipment necessary to prove one tiny segment of reality. He is aware of the immense precaution, patience and suffering necessary to reach, after many years, a "doubtful truth."

This patient research and meticulous preparation end by meaning more than discovery. The thinker has become like the hunter of Pascal, who preferred the hunt and all its preparations to the hare or pheasant.

Because of this, Christianity offends the intellectual. It is not the content of this or that dogma that irritates him, nor any mystery that scandalizes him. It is the free gift which humiliates him.

Being used to discovering only minute fragments of truth after painful and rigorous discipline, he ends believing truth to be the property of an élite. The true and the beautiful are no longer every man's property; they are a remote oasis reached only by the few. He who knows the cost of an education, the labor of historical research, or of hours spent in a laboratory observing a microscopic fragment of reality, has felt the joy reserved to the aristocratic élite of researchers. And these, without disassociating themselves from that part of humanity, which is satisfied with life as it is; without plunging into an unknown jungle in the pursuit of truth, find themselves, in Christianity, suddenly on an equal footing with the postman, the little girl, the fat country priest. All of these people who have never lived through the agonies of research, share equally with him in the Truth. This democracy of God, this being simply one of the people of God, offends the intellectual and puts him off.

Modern man is reluctant to enter into a dialogue. Modern intelligence is affirmative, assertive, and consists of *my* outlook on reality. My thoughts are my creation; an empire and affirmation of my own.

For that reason moderns call faith and grace contradictions, whereas faith and grace are a dialogue and exchange. Heart and Soul are not outraged by this exchange; intelligence and love are in fact made for this interchange. One understands the other, as other. This demands a mental receptivity which does not make an affirmation or a creation of truth, but an intelligence which is a window through which, instead of forming truth, one is formed by Truth. A mental humility is required which is poles away from the mental Michaelangelism of our contemporaries.

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IN OUR generation, however, there are other types of unbelievers, who are hostile to Christianity. We must understand their reasons. This hostility they often neither know nor state, mentally surrounding it not with reasons but with rationalizations borrowed from scriptural research, philosophy or history.

There is the type who has not obscured spiritual values by dint of sinning. He has not departed from God because of his joy of life, or his love of flesh or violence. He plunges into sin from fear of God.

He has become superficial not from vitality, but from a horror of holiness. He fears the terrible seriousness of God's love. He understands, better than most, Christ's words to Angela of Foligno: "It is no laughing matter that I have loved you;" He is afraid of being loved by this tremendous lover, whose love is described in scripture as being implacable as Hell and demanding as Death.

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This man does not hurl himself into dissipation because he is shallow. He does it to hide from God. He flees from God into the labyrinths of noise and momentary intoxication, or to the subtleties of academic problems.

It is not money, sex, work, or politics which prevents his finding time to think of death, and the momentousness of life. His physical and intellectual sins are not the cause of atheism. They are the fragile armor which keeps God out of his profound and anguished soul.

He wants to destroy his fear of death by emptying life of all significance. His atheism is a refuge from fear, a heartening, flat world in which life is an adventure without meaning. He is reassured by this point of view, and he constructs a philosophy around his emotions. His intellectual scepticism and his narrow and peremptory assertions, his aggressive arguments impervious to reason, show that his system evolves not from a philosophical position but from an emotion.

Behind his words there is an echo of Saint Peter's: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" The fear of being loved, of adventure, of responsibility,—that is what animates this terror-stricken soul. This man's intelligence, slave of his emotions, does not make of his doubt a spiritual adventure. It is a masochistic affirmation of nothingness.

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ONE OF THE illusions of our generation is the confounding of verity with verification. For the modern atheist, an affirmation, a judgment on existence cannot be valid unless preceded by verification. For the unbeliever, hell and heaven are the only possible verifications of the existence or absence of uncreated love, whereas Christians experience the savored knowledge of God through Love, as the terminal point of fidelity. Under all the efforts and arrogance of this modern man dwells a great evil.

Modern man is lost in the anonymity of the great city, lost in infinite space reckoned in millions of light-years. He is not valued as a person by his employer, his client, or his government. With infinite humility he knows that he is valued as "cannon-fodder," "productive force," or "potential consumer." He has never been really loved —often not even by his parents except for his successes, or by his friends except for his talents and qualities. He has never received a glance of pure love which penetrates his innermost being. He is in a state of complete solitude and despair.

His desolation is so great that he is unaware of it. He doesn't even believe that he could be loved with a personal love; that he is precious in an un-interchangeable way. To be loved by the Infinite in this way seems to him unintelligible. He is so desolate and humble that he cannot even repeat Saint Paul's words: "The folly of the Cross." Nor those of another saint: "Lord, are you mad to wish me well?"

As he sees it the Catholic apostolate's main purpose is to add yet another to its ranks; he does not know that, for the Catholic, life is intolerable without his salvation. Despairing of human love—figure and shadow of uncreated love—he has only sarcasm, now for Wisdom, now for the folly of God.

When this being who doesn't even love himself is finally loved by a love that in its essence is neither moralizing, reforming, or admiring; when he is reached by a personal love that cannot be repaid by any human being but himself —even one far holier and lovable than he—the poor soul capitulates and all its defenses crash down. Then will this man be able finally to glimpse the truth of the mystery of mysteries: that God preferred to die, than to be without him.

New Isolationists in Art

JEROME MELLQUIST

WITH A LITTLE dissection it might be possible to lay bare a whole series of connections between art and politics. This would include obvious examples such as Napoleon's commanding a style and getting it in the frozen Republican celebrations of David. The same thing happens in more subtle and more significant ways too. It might be that the machine-gun duplication of images in pre-1914 Italian Futurism predicated the advent of Mussolini. Or again we might demonstrate that surely there was a pestilential connection between the flea-bitten sea lions and flapjack timepieces of Dali, headmaster of the Surrealists, and the imminent approach of World War II. For in both cases one form of decomposition merely anticipated another.

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SIMILARLY, our political-esthetic scalpel might well be employed to uncover a certain infection previously jeopardizing our good health and now once again threatening a recurrence of the same old ailment. This ailment, which long since has been stigmatized in politics as Isolationism, may be spotted under an identical tag in art. And it takes no great sleuth to discover that it has appeared in both places under virtually the same circumstances.

It may be recalled, for instance, that at almost the very hour when Herbert Hoover and others were urging their countrymen to "Buy American," there arose an All-American insistence in our art. Emulating their

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protectionist and cave-retreating confrères in the political realm, our esthetic retreaters, noting the trumpet-blast of Thomas Craven, headed back for the silos and the untainted cow-country of the Middle West. There, surely, the American painter would be safe from European contamination. In fact, all intellectual concourse with France was to be suspended.

Somewhat later, the evangelical Mr. Craven amplified this first crude trumpet-call into a long and withering book. Here (in *Modern Art, The Men and the Movements*) he proclaimed that only the bony cattle or the stalwart threshing-crews of Thomas Benton furnished fit American subject-matter.

Other suitable communicants might be John Steuart Curry, with his contented farmsteads, or Grant Wood with his scroll-saw cutouts simulating American primitives. Craven baptized the venerable John Sloan and also permitted Reginald Marsh into the fold. All others were barred as un-American. And European influences, too, were excluded as reprehensible and antagonistic to American mores.

Fortunately, Pearl Harbor virtually sank this flotilla of questionable craft. A few survivors clung to the wreckage, but Craven has become rather plaintive since. Thus our First Congregation of Nativists has been pretty well dispersed. Now we are threatened with their successors, the New Isolationists, a crop of subtler esthetic saviors, but one no less tinctured by the gall of a militant and harmful bias. These new and more polished barbarians once again would exclude us from fructifying contact with the outside world, but they do so in terms of a more slippery argument.

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JUST AS the original Nativists began their esthetic needling and the plunge into the depression, so these New Isolationists make their drive for backwardness precisely in these post-war years when a puzzled and unsettled world wonders where to seek security. Now Isolationists point with elegant gestures to the past. They found their first prophet, some 18 months ago, in Mr. Robsjohn-Gibbings, a practicing interior-decorator who detests modern art. He claimed that it sprang from practices of black magic, that it was nursed by anti-democratic snobs, that it bawled its way into favor through the noisy help of merchants, and that now it is a monster among us. Laughable as both nonsense and half-truths, his tirade nevertheless got a following and prompted similar complaints against the living art of today.

Shortly after his pronouncement gained its first adherents, the Institute of Modern Art in Boston sternly announced that it would nail up a new shingle changing "Modern" to "Contemporary." Next a Boston enthusiast and patron of the ballet, Mr. Lincoln Kirstein, complained that the modern artist is ill-trained and badly educated and called for a return to the chalk-deposits of the 19th century, or even more distant ages. Still later the Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Mr. Francis Henry Taylor, reiterated these complaints, adding that the contemporary painter was a "flat-chested pelican" and then strode off to his museum barracks, which presumably are shock-proof to all contemporary disturbances.

These New Isolationists are too sleek and skillful to promote any flagwaving expeditions, yet they would have us retire from the living currents nevertheless. They stick, as a matter of fact, to academic generalities, and their tone and above all their traditional allegiances show clearly enough that they would segregate us from the challenge of this hour.

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IS IT TRUE, then, that advanced artists today are chopping up the mind of mankind? Are they preparing further disbalance? Or are they helping the world through the darkened woods of these days in the late Forties? Each of these questions gets a hopeful answer if one but turns to the men emerging since the start of the present decade.

France, for instance, has produced an entirely new group of advancing artists ever since the Germans tramped into Paris. Possibly the first was Jacques Villon, a one-time Cubist who, though already in his sixties, suddenly began to produce as if he had drunk some new liquor of youth. He took his palette and his easel to the orchards and vineyards of Normandy. There, in the country of his fellow-Norman Poussin, he put forth a series of consolidated, strong and vibrant canvases imbued by a positive incandescence. Villon seemed, indeed, to have projected a hope ahead, and the younger men gave eye to his accomplishments. Jean Bazaine, for one, not only painted but gathered about him a corps of faithful who experienced a new access of confidence at the very moment when others saw only desperation. Alfred Manessier began to write and to paint in the expectation of a better turn of events. Still other colleagues, meeting in the back room of a bar, there plotted a huge exhibition for the day when the French again would be free.

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THESE artists, to be sure, did not work in the clichés of back-to-the-farm subjects nor as addicts of a past long since dead. Bazaine painted prismatic canvases often suggesting a view from an airplane. He did not specify every subject, but saw it distinctly, as if through a checkering of color. Manessier did angular Christs and other religious images, melting them down and heating them up, as it were, in some furnace devoted to stained-glass windows. Marchand dipped his brush in kindling reds, while Pignon, a semi-abstractionist like both Bazaine and Manessier, worked in terms of fishing-scenes more readily recognizable.

Still later, Bazaine would publish a brochure reiterating his belief in a semi-abstract painting suited to the exigencies of the later Forties. An associate, Charles Lapicque, would produce a fine array of sailboats in 1946 and float them on a compelling swell of rhythm.

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Hans Hartung, a German who lost a leg battling the Nazis, would paint, even in the last two years, with brave molts of color, somehow imparting to them the sonority one otherwise might associate with the brasses in the orchestra. And there have been others, none of whom has relinquished the belief that present disorder can be shaped again. Turning to England, one finds a new religious fervor in painters like Graham Sutherland and John Piper. As for English sculptors, Henry Moore, the hole-and-concavity man so well displayed two seasons ago by the Museum of Modern Art, has been called an apostle of life because of his predilection for the more abundant side of nature. These English would seem to have aimed at restoring their country from the very ruins and then, like the British Labor Party, to be attempting reconstitution despite the rubble of war.

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THE ITALIANS, too, have bubbled with a new hope, with the 60-year old Morandi imparting a beaming light to his still-lifes, with Cagli continually inventing new motifs for murals, with Mario Marini carving out commendable horses in sculpture, and with a whole new school showing confidence, if possibly not maturity as yet, in Rome. Many informed Italians declare that the prime event of the post-war years has been that for the first time since the arrival of Mussolini, they could get a good glimpse at what had happened in art during the last 25 years. The result has been a gratifying surge of vitality, a welcome to positive new currents, and a stirring-up such as the Italian public had not witnessed for years. Here, at any rate, there has been no tendency to somnolence nor any such tendency towards insulation as our Neo-Isolationists are trying to promulgate.

Coming back to the U.S., surely one hopeful sign has been the public's increasing welcome to the exhilarating and impetuous work of the veteran John Marin. He has emerged from the War years an acknowledged master and an ambassador to the world. The quippish Alexander Calder gets attention in Brazil, in France, in England, and demonstrates that the mood of Mark Twain is not dead. Younger men, too, advance, notably the still too-little known William de Kooning, an admirable colorist and absolutely defiant spirit.

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WESTERN art, then, has once again surpassed local limitations. Our Canutes of backwardness have been unable to still the tides, which overtop all the petty barriers of fear and academic retreat. Bracing currents already have started to bear us beyond the stagnant drifts and eddies of the New Isolationists toward a better international prospect. Is it too much to hope that these also are the currents that will dominate the political period to come? If so, the belated Arcadians are doubly men of the past and no less dead than their counterparts, the back-country isolationists in politics.

Communications

Reply to Mr. Cort on the British Crisis

TO the Editors: Flattering as is the notice Mr. Cort has taken of my recent article, I am nevertheless puzzled to know what he is driving at. I made the remark that the essential conditions for a revival of vigorous speculative activity were in my opinion absent in Britain because the high rewards due to abundant natural resources were no longer available, but I said or implied that something might just conceivably be done if labor would increase its productivity.

Mr. Cort rejoins that I am apparently prepared to call upon the worker to lay new and heavy burdens on himself while I despair of getting the capitalist even to do "his duty." Mr. Cort thus seems to treat vigorous speculative activity as a duty incumbent on anybody possessed of investible funds and I cannot see how he gets that way, still less how he gets any confirmation from the Encyclicals. Indeed I am left wondering whether Mr. Cort has a true picture of what "vigorous speculative activity" means. . . .

MAY I therefore point out that speculative activity means gambling—neither more or less; it includes not merely the installation of new machines—which the British are glad enough to install if they can get the machines—but the whole gamut of activities from the trying out of costly new processes and inventions to the creation of new forms of demand and the risk of capital in unexplored raw material sources. It was to this beneficent practice that both Britain and America owed their rapid economic progress in the nineteenth century. They advanced because a sufficiently large number of people were ready to risk their money on what at the time may often have appeared to be completely crazy idea. These men were ready to gamble, because in a fundamentally wealthy and rapidly expanding society the prizes were sufficiently attractive to tempt them, and much more often than not their money went down the drain. If there had been no prizes they would not have gambled nor would there have been any reason why they should.

I will even go so far as to say that in any but certain specific circumstances this activity may perhaps not even be desirable. Since the majority of speculative enterprises end in bankruptcy they constitute misdirections of effort even though the few that succeed make the game in the long run well worth the candle. But a rich community can obviously stand this kind of strain when it would have much more serious effects on a poor one.

But because the conditions favoring speculation—in itself a morally indifferent activity—have ceased to obtain, it becomes all the more necessary to use to the full any other means that might aid Britain towards recovery, and among such means is certainly a greater and more sustained effort on the part of certain sections of British labor and the calling of a halt to the steady upward pressure on wages. I am sorry if that statement causes Mr. Cort pain but it is true. . . .

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Further Mr. Cort should really not talk of the British worker's present pay being "admittedly inadequate to meet minimum requirements." . . . I can assure Mr. Cort that what with subsidized food, subsidized housing, free school milk, free medical, optical and dental treatment and the rest of it, "minimum requirements" are on the whole very adequately provided for. And if anybody doubts this let him look at the British worker's children. He will find them as healthy, if not healthier than those of America. That at least is the impression gained by my wife and myself after a year's residence in this country.

J. L. BENVENISTI.

The British Crisis

Montreal, Canada

TO the Editors: Why does THE COMMONWEAL adopt such an extraordinarily ungenerous attitude toward the British Labor Party's efforts to right the social wrongs of its country? England today is a laboratory in which extremely valuable and interesting experiments are being made in the combining of economic justice and political freedom. Surely an onlooking world (with a bad conscience) should be vitally interested. . . .

I would have expected THE COMMONWEAL to give detailed publicity to every attempt the Attlee, Cripps (etc.) team makes to solve one of its problems (problems common to all our countries); I would have expected its editors to analyze, to criticize, to admire outrightly or with reservations, to suggest. But surprisingly, you've given no encouragement to these fine, hard-driven humanitarians—only silence and the averted eye.

The editor of *People and Freedom,* organ of the English Christian Democratic movement, wrote last May: "Let us agree with T. S. Eliot and Aldous Huxley that there can be and should be an advancing élite (for the growth and preservation of culture). . . . At its highest level it will and it must include poets and philosophers, seers and saints *et pauperes Christi.* That civilization is best where such men of conscience have access to advise in the chancelleries of power. Here alone are the true aristocrats, with whom democracy, as M. K. Gandhi said, cannot dispense. That is why such men as Lansbury and Cripps, such men as Gandhi and Mercier, Lincoln and St. Vincent de Paul, are so immensely valuable to us; and an entire civilization is to be judged, not by its mechanical agreement with them, but by the welcome it gives them."

MADELEINE SHERIDAN.

ACTUALLY THE COMMONWEAL *does not take a hostile view of the British Labor Party. We have several times editorially proclaimed our interest in their program as a valuable effort to attain economic justice without destroying a free society.*

On occasion, when we have published articles unsympathetic to some aspects of Labor's program, we have done so in the interest of presenting differing opinions on a matter of public controversy.—THE EDITORS.

Of Note

Plan for Economic Democracy

THE WAGE EARNER (607 Fine Arts Bldg., 58 W. Adams, Detroit 26, Mich.) the organ of the Detroit Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, published its tenth anniversary issue in September. In a front-page editorial it defined its program for American economic democracy in this way:

1. Our economic system will not run itself, and competition alone is not an adequate automatic governor. Production and distribution must be planned and organized for the primary purpose of the common welfare.

2. This planning and organizing is not a proper function of the government. Centralizing economic controls in the hands of the government tends to destroy freedom. New agencies to govern industry must be found.

3. These new agencies can be found by recreating the basic natural partnership of capital and labor (workers and owners).

4. The labor partner to the economic process has been ejected from the partnership and denied a voice in the major economic decisions. The true aim of organized labor should be to recover its position as an equal partner with capital.

5. The first step in this direction is to establish in each major industry a joint "Industry Council" composed of representatives of organized workers and organized owners in that industry together with a government or other public representative. This Industry Council should undertake the planning and organizing of its industry for the common welfare.

6. The precise character and functions of each Industry Council must be determined by the people who are members of that industry.

7. The industries thus organized should choose a National Economic Council, likewise representing capital, labor and government. This National Council should undertake the planning and organizing for the entire national economy.

Importance of Catholic Rural Youth

IN an address delivered before the American Country Life Association reported in *The Witness* (845 Bluff Street, Dubuque, Iowa), Bishop Edwin V. O'Hara of Kansas City talked of the importance of the rural community; and stated the rural problem, as seen by Catholics, in these terms:

"It is basically the problem of keeping actively in the rural community a larger percentage of the intelligent and spiritually minded boys and girls who are born there. . . . It requires talent and char-

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acter far above the average to provide the better farming, better business and better living that President Theodore Roosevelt desired in 1909 for the farms of America."

The Bishop listed the following three considerations that the Church is presenting to promising rural youth to keep them on the farm.

(1) Farming, especially when farms are personally owned, makes for economic independence. This is the best safeguard for intellectual independence—"which is the first prerequisite of an enlightened mind and a liberal culture."

(2) Farming permits a person to be self-employed, gives the farmer responsibility for his own conduct, permits him to "choose his own path, win his own success."

(3) Farming cements family life and makes children a true blessing. City environment is "at war with the family" and makes children a liability, while the farm "is the friend of family life" and makes children a definite economic asset.

Social Security and the Koran

IN a series of special articles from Morocco Georges Vogt tells in *La France Catholique* (12 rue Edmond-Valentin, Paris VII) of local reactions to various accepted French ideas. In a recent issue he describes a conversation with an Arab sage, whom he had come to know, about the concept of social security:

> Drinking tea flavored with mint under the fragrant shade of orange trees in blossom, the venerable old man commented at length on passages from the Book of Mohammed in which the believer asks for guidance on this subject. Here in substance is a translation of three texts: "Be charitable toward your fathers, your neighbors, orphans and poor people. Be kindly to every man." Second, "The goods of this earth soon pass. The treasures of Heaven are more precious and more lasting . . . God bestows them upon believers who put in the hands of the indigent a portion of their wealth." Third, "Those who give the prescribed portion of their goods to the poor who beg alms and to men who are ashamed to beg will be surrounded with glory in the Garden of Delights."
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> It must frankly be admitted that these wise precepts dictated by Mohammed are no longer sufficient to serve as a basis for a decree on workmen's compensation for accidents or old age pensions. The holy man continued: "Men of good will recognize in this way their obligations toward those who labor in their employment. There is no need of any further regulating." Indeed!
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> For their part the French in Morocco do not wish social security either, for they know the drain that this voracious ogre exerts upon their finances.

Catholic International News

Europeans in Indonesia

"FOR the Indo-Europeans in Indonesia (people of mixed descent) the best solution will probably be to become part of the Indonesian community," Mr. J. Sippel, Member of the Legislature of Pasoendan (Western Java) and Delegate to the Indonesian Round Table Conference as a representative of the European minority in Indonesia, told KNAP, the Dutch CIP affiliate.

"The Indo-European minority," Mr. Sippel declared, "is relatively small, and it consists to a large extent of civil servants . . . The people of European descent cannot expect special privileges . . . On the other hand, if they stand on their own merits, they will have a good chance of making a living. Indonesian leaders have shown a very realistic attitude in this matter. If you decide to become one of us, you will be considered as an Indonesian, they say."

Mr. Sippel stated that he does not anticipate a large-scale exodus to Holland. "It would be difficult," he declared, "to find work in the Netherlands for 100,000 people from Indonesia. Furthermore, the average Indo-European would not feel at home here and could not easily stand the climate."

Mr. Sippel also declared that several Indonesian delegates to the Round Table Conference had told him that they were deeply impressed by what they had seen in the Netherlands and that they had great respect for Dutch organizing ability and for the political order prevailing in the Netherlands. Mr. Sippel concluded from this that, in building the United States of Indonesia, leaders would be anxious to make use of the skill and experience of people of Dutch descent.

With even greater assurance, Mr. Sippel stated his views on the subject of religious freedom in Indonesia. He pointed out in particular that Indonesian leaders have expressed willingness to apply the principles of the United Nations' Universal Declaration on Human Rights. (The Hague, 9/24—CIP.)

Priest Shortage in Dominican Republic

TWO thousand additional priests are needed to carry on the work of the Church among the predominantly Catholic population of the Dominican Republic. The total population numbers 2,060,000; all but 60,000 are Catholic, at least nominally.

At present, there are only about 200 priests at work in the Dominican Republic, according to the survey, or one for every 10,000 Catholics. Forty of these are native secular priests, 133 are members of ten religious communities established in the Republic, and 27 are Spanish secular priests.

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A campaign is now under way by Church leaders to encourage more vocations to the priesthood. A large seminary, built at Government expense, has been opened recently with an initial enrollment of 100. (Rome, 9/22—CIP.)

Pro-Communist Evangelicals in East Germany

THE Evangelical Bishop of Berlin, Dr. Otto Dibelius, who is also President of the Council of the German Evangelical Church and, in this capacity, the most authoritative spokesman of German Protestantism, is now being violently criticized by a number of pro-Communist clergymen in the Soviet Zone. One of these, Rev. Karl Kleinschmid, Pastor of the Lutheran Cathedral of Schwerin, accused him of "attempting to draw a line between himself and the clergymen and Evangelical Christians in the Eastern Zone who consider cooperation in the democratic regeneration of Germany as a human as well as a Christian duty."

Pastor Kleinschmid declared that there is need for an "Evangelical Action" in the Eastern Zone to support "people's democracy." Such a movement does not exist yet, he stated, because neither the Soviet Military Administration nor the Socialist Unity Party (Communist) have wished to interfere with the freedom of the Church. Pastor Kleinschmid also claimed that there are "three dozen religious Socialists among the clergymen in the State of Mecklemburg alone," but that so far none of them has been entrusted with a leading position in the Church.

The idea of an "Evangelical Action" organization, mentioned by Pastor Kleinschmid and several other pro-Communist clergymen, is apparently a Protestant counterpart to the pro-Communist "Catholic Action" organization in Czechoslovakia, which is being used as an opening wedge for Communist propaganda in religious circles.

Attacks in pro-Communist circles against Bishop Dibelius of Berlin have been in reply to several statements of his denouncing totalitarianism, especially his recent pastoral letter in which he declared: "The political order which is coming into being around us shows many characteristics of a regime which we resisted in the name of God during the Nazi era. Might is again above right, and there is a falsehood and hostility against the Gospel of Christ. The ill-famed Gestapo has risen again in Section K 5 of the so-called People's Police . . . Children baptized in the Church are being indoctrinated with anti-Christian ideas." (Berlin, 9/22—CIP.)

German Bishop Appeals for Tolerance

The Evangelical Bishop of Baden, Rev. Dr. Julius Bender, has issued a circular to all ministers in his area urging them to spread tolerance towards the Jews. "All local churches must oppose the deeply-rooted hostile sentiments towards the Jewish people," Bishop Bender declared. The Evangelical Bishop's appeal followed several similar statements by other ecclesiastical authorities, both Catholic and Protestant, in Germany, such as that o fthe Chancery of the Catholic Archdiocese of Munich and Freising. (Munich, 9/21—CIP.)

The Stage & Screen

A Note on O'Casey

I THINK it is safe to assume that the production of O'Casey's "Silver Tassie" by the Interplayers, currently showing at Carnegie Recital Hall, is not a matter of first choice. Certainly it is not in an historical sense, since this courageous management has already one O'Casey to its credit. "Within The Gates" was offered by them in '48, and although I couldn't catch it then, I wish I might have, so as to be able to hark back and compare in the way of direction and acting.

However, the point is that while "Tassie" is not truly the best of this author, I have the feeling it may have been all the company could get. "The Plough And The Stars" which, together with "Juno," is his masterpiece, is every season optioned by one or other of Broadway's hopeful managers. And no one knows what may have become of announced plans to give us "Red Roses For Me." Presumably the Interplayers could not secure either of these rights. What they have secured nevertheless is a two-months crowded audience, volubly eager to attend whatever they can of this living dramatist. And, I had better add, the company has thereby received a good deal of deserved promotion with no criticism at all.

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I SUPPOSE all of the interested will remember something of the fable of "Tassie" and of its scandal in Irish Theatre circles. This was the play which severed O'Casey from the original Abbey directly after the first World War. The Abbey, somewhat pontifically guided by Yeats at the time, turned it down. In the lobby of Carnegie, the Interplayers have got a poster detailing the argument between the older and younger dramatist, and one must admit Yeats comes off a poor second-best in the first round. He found nothing but quibbles to support his distaste: he objected to O'Casey's War sections because O'Casey had not been *in* the War, for instance; he objected to the point of view; he was plainly appalled. And moreover, he seems to have been plainly, politically (I can think of no better word), scared. He did not honestly examine the piece esthetically or formally, and this is, I think, openly to his shame. For, ironically enough, it is precisely Yeats who might have steered the later exiled O'Casey directly on to the stage, rather than into printed books of plays—books which are constantly intellectually fumbled, constantly optioned, and rarely if ever walked.

On the part of Yeats, I should surely call this refusal a stingy deal. The man of myth and mists directly rejects the man of the clocks and the town: the market man. What is even more unfortunate is that the quarrel between these two giants also seems to have resolved itself into one of rhetoric. This is the old Irish enigma—that the Irishman's words seem always to coerce his philosophy. For two hundred years and more (take Swift through Joyce), the Irish have been making the English language and from thence, it would appear,

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their truth. On the one hand, we have Yeats consciously paring and paring his lines, dis-intensifying his dramatic images, and presenting us with dream. On the other hand, we have O'Casey consciously piling adjective on adjective, and adverb on adverb on adjective, to present us with men.

Now, dramatically speaking, this latter method is foolish and represents a frightful loss to us. Dramatically speaking, I think everyone will agree that in choosing the town, O'Casey has indeed chosen the greater scene. This scene—the Dublin of Cathedral and slum—necessarily harnesses him to a kind of warm universality, to a largeness of mind and heart. Here he must poise the folk with the popular, the poems with the money, the garden with the barricade. And he does so and with wonderful compassion. But what he ignores is that compassion is not *always* rhapsodic, and that it is rarely incantatory. More and more, throughout his work, we find his characters drowning in a spate of contrived rhythms, lost in a sort of rhetorical rodomondade.

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IT IS TRUE the "Silver Tassie" shows the beginning of this sad descent on the part of its author. But it is not really interesting for another reason: it has got no characters at all. Its hero is a one-dimensional baby from start to finish and its clowns are merely feeble repeats out of "Juno." The much more recent "Red Roses" on the other hand, *has* a hero; and it has characters; and it has clowns. And it has, moreover, the best example of O'Casey's symphonic concern with the state of dream. But alas, it is so larded with images, so stitched with adjectives and modifiers of every sort, it is almost unreadable and I'm sure would be unspeakable by the best of companies. Mouthing it over to oneself, one can only agonizedly think: oh, why will O'Casey not embrace the opposition and use it? Why will he not read the stage Yeats? Why will he not learn why Yeats had to change his own "curd-pale moon?"

Actually, it is a return to eloquence O'Casey wants as a theatre man, and what we want from him. At the moment his weapon is not any way political; it is simply a large blue pencil. "Red Roses" ought to be won for the stage everywhere. And by himself.

KAPPO PHELAN.

The Children's Hour Continued

LAST WEEK we applauded "It Happened in Europe," a Hungarian film that forcefully showed how children suffer in war-torn countries. This week the same subject is presented in even stronger terms by showing complete demoralization in a defeated country, and again the innocent victims are children who without understanding soon lose their innocence. In the introduction to *"Germany—Year Zero,"* spoken while the camera slowly wanders over the ruins of the big city, Quentin Reynolds says: "Berlin is a huge monument to death, not to the death of people who once lived and died here, but a monument to an evil dream of power that lies buried forever, the world hopes, under these ruins. . . . The defeated live in an almost lifeless country, victims of their own evil dream." And the picture which Italian Roberto Rossellini produced, wrote and directed in Germany is a study of the evil that continues after war. It is a study or an exercise because, in spite of the fact that the central figure in the dramatic story is a twelve-year-old boy, almost every scene concentrates on defeat, demoralization, degeneration; and the total effect, never relieved by hope or joy or even the humor necessary for sanity, is cold. We regret seeing people fall so low, but the picture we see fails to stir our emotions.

Against this background of ruins, unhappiness and sordid living is told the story of a boy. He lives, in a house shared by several other families, with his elderly sick father, a brother who fears he will be punished by occupation forces, and a sister whose evenings are not accounted for too satisfactorily. The boy feels he is the main support of his family. The responsibilities are too much for him and he falls prey to the evil arguments around him. When the father complains about being a burden, and the boy's degenerate schoolmaster quotes Nazi doctrine about destroying the weak, the boy takes matters into his own hands, poisons his father and only later realizes what he has done. When he is reminded that he is only a little boy, he replies, "You should have told me that before." His despair and hatred of himself lead to suicide. The wheel has made a complete revolution and even innocence is destroyed in Hitler's wake.

In spite of the fact that "Germany — Year Zero" is so well acted by a German cast and is so interesting cinematically, I do not think it stands with Rossellini's "Paisan" or "Open City" which had definite positive values to offset their realistic portrayal of war. "Germany—Year Zero" hits a depressing low from which there is no indication of recovery.

*

THE HOLLYWOOD fare is so thin this week that it hardly deserves consideration; but here are a few notes for the record. *"The Fighting Kentuckian"* covers a little-known episode in American history concerning the French who settled in Alabama after Napoleon's defeat. They get quite a pushing around by various Americans who hope to steal their land, but a big brave Kentuckian (John Wayne in homespun) comes to their rescue. Unfortunately the plot is so confused that when it's all over you still find all this a little-known episode in American history.

Admirers of the radio serial *"My Friend Irma"* will of course want to see the movie based on this fluff. It's no better or worse than the radio program, except that now you can see Marie Wilson as the dumb little bunny whose malaprops are occasionally quite funny. Further comedy is added through the antics of Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis, a zany nightclub team. I found myself laughing at some of the cracks and situations; but I probably would have got as many laughs out of a half-hour radio show.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

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Books

Three Mystics. El Greco, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila. Edited by Father Bruno De J. M., O.D.C. Sheed & Ward. $7.50.

WHOEVER thought to combine the writings of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross with the pictures of El Greco in one volume, had a very fertile idea indeed. The works of these great mystics of the Catholic Reform in Spain are most suited to give to the modern reader a conception of the dynamic religious forces of this period, so often misinterpreted by Protestant historians. In leafing through the book the religiously inclined reader will be fascinated by the "claire-obscure" in the verse of St. John, by St. Teresas's fruitful prose and by the religious force with which all figures of El Greco strive upwards. We do not know if the great painter from Crete who regarded Toledo as the best place in the world to live had ever met St. Teresa who, a few years before his coming, had made her first foundation in this very town. We also ignore the question of whether he knew personally the great mystical poet who was composing the Spiritual Canticles in a prison cell at Toledo at the same time.

*

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The text is not of uniform consistency. It is an anthology of the best writings of the two saints and some articles of varying quality, giving biographical material and even a comparison between the handwritings of the two great Spanish mystics. If we may be permitted to make a suggestion for a possible second edition of this book, we would recommend to the editor not to overlook Reinhold Schneider's work "Iberisches Erbe" (Summa Verlag, Olten, Switzerland). This profound work of the contemporary German poet and historian contains the best synthesis of the powers of faith in the Spanish reform and a wonderful characterization of St. Teresa. Excerpts from this book might enrich considerably the volume under review.

Though some of the best Grecos are now on our side of the Atlantic, the genius of his work is not sufficiently

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known to a broader public. Thus this book will open many eyes to a religious art of a vehement power of expression, which scorns conventional sweetness. This is an educational influence in itself, but it opens, at the same time, a way to the understanding of the concise mystical literature of the sixteenth century, which is so much superior to the often sentimental and verbose religious reflections of more modern times.

MAX FISCHER.

The Crack in the Column. George Weller. Random House. $3.00.

"ABOUT all I demand," said Walker, hand on the jeep's metal skirt, "is that you have one political thought a week. And this thought, to satisfy me, must be self-interested, not philanthropic, military, political, permanent, as nearly self-liquidating as possible, expressed in simple language, contain statistics and a minimum of abstract sentiments."

"And where does it all come out?" asked Trapezis.

"It comes out at bases, permanent American bases in the Middle East."

That, of course, is where it all came out in 1944 when Mr. Weller first promulgated, at length, his hard-boiled, pessimistic, but very respectable political theories in a book called *Bases Overseas.* He now has put them in novel form and surrounded them with excellent reporting of events in wartime Greece of the sort which made him one of the ablest foreign correspondents of the Chicago *Daily News* and which won for him a Pulitizer prize.

★

MINGLING fact with fiction, Mr. Weller's characters jump, with varying degrees of ease, through the hoop of contemporary history and so communicate to the reader the state of affairs in Greece during the middle and late years of the war. Limited by a dual obligation to conform to history and to be walking, talking, foreign office reports, his characters become little more than prototypes of political programs or national traits and achieve somewhat the same relation to reality as the people who inhabit the human interest and gossip columns of a daily newspaper.

Besides Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden, who have bit parts, the cast includes: Major Walker, a leader of the British underground in German-held Athens, who expresses the author's views on America's "retreat and pay" foreign policy: Nitsa, his Greek right-hand girl, who, when not busy symbolizing Greece, manages to put on enough weight to be attractive to Lieutenant Trapezis, head of an American-Greek paratroop Group which derails a troop train; Lieutenant Tommy McPhail, an American "flyboy," who courts and wins the singularly non-political Leda; Luigi, an Italian PW who is the fulfilment of all the popular Anglo-American notions concerning his race; and Miriam Thaxter, a Red Cross girl with the switch-on, switch-off mentality of an electric blanket and who, as a matter of fact, is brought to serve very much the same purposes. As might be expected, the frequent romantic interludes which occupy this cast are conducted on a level or two below "*Life* Goes To a Blanket Party" and with similar regard for photographic detail.

By far the best sections of the book are the too infrequent touches of irony and satire directed against American or British conduct of the war or against the many incongruities of modern war itself. War holds no illusions for Mr. Weller and he sees and reports it quite clearly as a number of loosely connected individuals doing something in particular part of the time and nothing in particular most of the time. He records faithfully and with considerable skill an already strangely out of date wartime *patois* sprinkled with Greek common and proper nouns to lend authenticity.

It is unfortunate that instead of this book, Mr. Weller could not have written what he gives every indication of being able to write—a delightful satire of the war in Greece in the manner of Evelyn Waugh's *Scoop,* a serious political essay on recent British-American-Greek relations, and a tiny, privately printed, volume of verse dedicated to Greece, the woman he loves.

JAMES J. WEY.

Makers of the Modern Mind. Thomas P. Neill. Bruce. $3.75.

I MUST confess that I began reading these pages with the biased impression that there was some sort of artificiality in the author's choice of the "Makers." I would not agree with the idea of having, for instance, Leibnitz excluded from the collection, since the Modern Mind lives at last in the world of atomic energy, and the world where even matter is an *equilibrium* of forces, of condensed energy, is the world described long ago by the Philosopher of the Monads, of Monadism. But the author, in the title, does not say *The Makers,* but simply *Makers;* and it is only fair to acknowledge that these eleven have really been typical, if makers of "The Modern Mind" are men who "ride the intellectual tide of their time" . . . if "they act as *foci* for many ideas which, without them, would not be combined as strong forces for the change in history."

Yet I should hesitate to consider romantic and freaky Rousseau a more dynamic and influential *focus* of the latent revolt of the masses than Voltaire, with his vitriolic sarcasm, so corrosive to tyrannic, official and social hypocrisy.

★

IN HIS reckoning of the spiritual forces focused in the eleven, the author is far from hinting such forces are invariably intelligent or good. Even when the beginning was apparently generous and well-meaning, spiritual power, indulged with passion, has often become a power of evil. "Wyclif, Hus and others had identified themselves with discontented peasants and they have been cut down like mad dogs; Luther did not

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let a compassionate heart lead him to a similar fate." (After having focused the people's thirst for liberty, he invited the princes to take liberty as their own monopoly and to treat the revolted people as mad dogs!)

Neill is particularly and duly severe on Luther and afterwards on Freud and Marx. But he extends his inexorable severity to people who, I imagine, do not need it so badly: incidentally to Voltaire, who, I think, when he opposes Rousseau, does so for the love of reason and even at times (as about the earthquake of Lisbon) because he has a better and more Christian idea of Providence than gloomy Rousseau, with his Calvinistic, predestinarian and arbitrary God; insistently to Descartes, in whom he sees almost nothing but an abnormal pride "which enabled him to put himself up against the wisdom of the ages. . . ."

Neill explains earlier how the wisdom of the ages had been discredited by decadent Scholasticism. It was discussed in the schools, "slumbering, self-satisfied, contented with the protection offered by parliamentary decrees and royal armies." For some it had inspired intellectual indifferentism; thinkers, like Montaigne, took refuge in the darkest scepticism.

I am sure that those who would disagree, too, with the appraisal recorded here of Descartes' mind or of any other of these eleven powerful minds, will not waste their time reading this study: books are good when they force you to think for yourself. Even if we would prefer some other *makers* of the modern mind added to the eleven (even if we should be astonished at not seeing Comte brought in to complete the dozen), we shall all probably find that we have been in profitable company.

J. A. CORREIA.

Father Flanagan of Boys Town. Fulton Oursler and Will Oursler. Doubleday. $3.00.

I BELIEVE that it can be assumed that everyone knows in a general way what Boys Town is and the things that the Nebraska community accomplishes. The question is: how did it come to be? This is the subject of the first half of this simple, straightforward book—the tone of which is highly appropriate. Father Flanagan's early life provides several major clues.

The first one is his intense consciousness of a priestly vocation. This, coupled with the fact that he had to

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overcome tuberculosis before becoming able to complete his preparation for the priesthood, imparted extraordinary ardor to the way in which he embarked upon his calling. During his student days Edward Flanagan had also manifested great solicitude for the poor; it is believed that he contracted his TB by doing so much visiting and so many errands among the deplorably neglected patients in New York hospitals when he was a student at Dunwoodie.

As an assistant pastor in Omaha in 1913 he took upon himself the plight of the down and out, who were more numerous than ever his first summer because of a severe drought which had deprived many of these drifters of their usual itinerant employment. The success of his free hotels is a colorful story. But he found that very few of the hundreds he rehabilitated had any interest in finding or returning to God. Most of them felt that "it was too late." Many voiced the wish that they might have met him when they were younger.

Coupled with such constant reminders that regeneration should start before character has matured was Father Flanagan's poignant memory of the wayward and abandoned urchins of Rome he had encountered when studying at the Gregorian University before he was ordained. He began haunting Omaha courtrooms where juvenile defendants were being tried. After a time an increasing number of delinquent boys, in whom he had deep confidence, were paroled in his charge. And so step by step Father Flanagan strode toward founding the institution which was to become world famous.

These considerations comprise only a fragment of the inspiring and dramatic narrative embodied in this book. But even this much insight into Father Flanagan's character explains in good part why Boys Town has come to be a model for the care and rehabilitation of youth the world over.

EDWARD S. SKILLIN.

The Color of Ripening. Matthea Thorseth. Superior. $3.00

ON THE second page of *The Color of Ripening* the reviewer comes across the line, "Evening magic with a thousand elfin hands gripped his throat forcing it to give out a long-sustained, yodeling kringlehauk."

Without the context this line is difficult to understand. With the context it is impossible to understand. The reviewer starts thinking up cracks about the color of overripening and everybody is off to a bad start.

The Color of Ripening is a novel by a Norwegian-American about the IWW movement (wobblies) of the Pacific Northwest. The jacket tells you that IWW stands for "International Workers of the World," but Miss Thorseth must know very well that it stands for Industrial Workers of the World. She also has to her credit a real compassion for the poor and a certain amount of vague religious and social idealism. Beyond that she has nothing but a desire to write.

Norwegian-Americans who are passionately interested

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in the wobblies might conceivably gain more than they lose by reading this novel. But let them proceed at their own risk. JOHN C. CORT

The Purple Shamrock: The Hon. James Michael Curley of Boston. Joseph F. Dinneen. Norton. $3.75.

THE PURPLE SHAMROCK, Joseph Dinneen's biography of James M. Curley, is not a whitewash. It is a purplewash.

The author honestly chronicles the major sins and errors as well as the praiseworthy achievements of the man who rose from the mud flats of Boston's South End to be once governor and four times mayor. But in each case he also tries to find some extenuating circumstance or redeeming virtue. The result is a strange book; a muckraking defense.

On the one hand, Dinneen states some sweeping conclusions; businessmen "who were too ethical to arrange rebates knew their (tax) valuations would be pushed even higher," "everybody knew there wasn't a contract awarded that did not carry with it a cut for Curley." Curley in years past would have sued a writer for even implying such charges. But at the same time, Dinneen with an air of cynical political sophistication and a two-wrongs-make-a-right moral code disarms any criticism of these aberrations. Curly, moreover, undoubtedly likes the book because it puts on the record his *ex post facto* justification and rearrangement of the facts, especially those of the Roosevelt years. The Mayor is a delightful raconteur, but Mr. Dinneen does us a disservice by fatuously repeating these cocktail-hour reminiscences.

It is difficult to recommend the book to anyone. The reader looking for entertainment will miss the intimacy and pyschological penetration of Gene Fowler's *Beau James*. The non-Bostonian will be misled by the disconcerting number of minor factual errors and by the inadequate and defective analysis. The political scientist will be grieved by Dinneen's misconception of Curley as "the last of the city bosses" (Curley is not a machine boss and has never had the power of a Hague or the party prestige of Tammany's Charlie Murphy. He has always been a lone wolf.) Catholics will learn nothing new or significant about Curley's relations to his Church.

Mr. Dinneen is an able reporter and the author of the novel *Ward Eight*, a minor classic in the literature of the immigrant community. Similarly, James Curley is a fascinating subject. This book does justice neither to the talents of its author, nor to the significance of its subject.

WILLIAM V. SHANNON

Make Friends with Your Land. Leonard Wickenden. Devin-Adair. $2.50.

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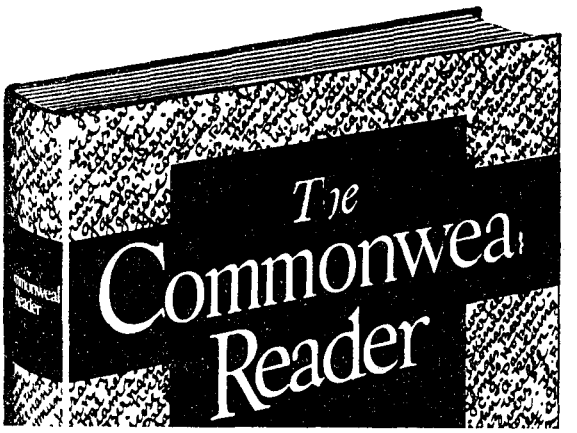

Edited by **EDWARD S. SKILLIN**
INTRODUCTION BY ANNE FREMANTLE

"As one who has been reading *The Commonweal* steadily during the twenty-five years of its existence, I have often been struck by the rich variety of fare that it has offered. Some numbers are, of course, better than others, and some periods better than others; so that I am left with an impression that at least three anthologies as good as this could be drawn from its pages. But to say this is only to emphasize what I said in the beginning; the abundance is so great that it must have been hard to make a selection. Certainly what is brought together here is very good."—THEODORE MAYNARD.

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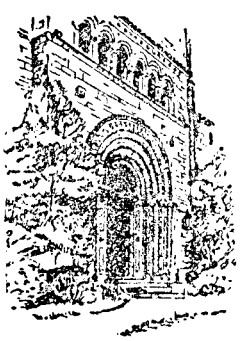

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Next Week

TOURIST AND PILGRIM, by H. A. Reinhold, draws a remarkable parallel between a journey from the West Coast to St. Louis and the state of the Church along the way, culminating in the National Liturgical Conference.

SOCIALISTS AND LEFT-WING CATHOLICS, by James Loeb, Jr., national executive secretary of Americans for Democratic Action, explores the need and possibilities for collaboration between these two anti-communist groups in Europe.

FOOTBALL CAPITAL OR INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY? by Waldemar Gurian, a thoughtful analysis of the two elements at Notre Dame and other American Catholic universities.

Also John C. Cort on Labor, Kappo Phelan on the coming Broadway season, Philip T. Hartung on current films.

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of poison spray—even though the remedy continually proves ineffectual. The case for organic fertilizers, animal and "green" manure (compost) has a strong theoretical foundation. Mr. Wickenden informally adduces enough scientific evidence to indicate that "organiculture," as opposed to artificial fertilizing, works in practice, too.

Leonard Wickenden is a chemist by profession. He presents things on the basis of scientific evidence. He does not claim that all insects will fly or crawl away if the supporting soil is properly treated and continually built up with organic nutriment, but he does demonstrate that the damage wrought by such insects thereby becomes negligible. He is convinced that people nourished on food which is a product of this sort of "natural" cultivation are considerably healthier than other compatriots, but finds the evidence, if corroborating, not yet ample enough to be conclusive.

He compares artificial fertilizer to a stiff drink. When the effect wears off, the organism in both cases has no vital residue to sustain it against its pathogenic attackers. The poison spray he would liken to a dose of medicine. The difficulty lies not only in failure to recognize universal principles of health but also in the cultivator's inability to understand that the soil itself is a microcosm of living things, "swarming with workers who are eager to give me their loyal help if I will give them mine. They will prepare the choicest food for my crops, they will manufacture drugs to protect them from disease, they will give them health and strength to fight their enemies. All they ask is food to their liking; would I not be a fool and a knave to offer them poison?"

One of his strongest arguments for this school of agriculture is a negative one: "with all the years of patient and skilled work that has been done on the development of new and highly productive varieties; with unusually good behavior on the part of the weather; with farm prices higher than they have even been; with approximately 16,000,000 tons of chemical fertilizers added to the soil; the best that the farms of America can do is to produce for each United States citizen, to consume for himself and to share with his starving European cousin, 88 percent of the corn, wheat and oats that they produced twenty years ago, and only 81 percent of our eleven main crops."

E. S.

CONTRIBUTORS

James RORTY has been preparing technical studies for the TVA and writing articles on food and conservation questions. He is the author of "Our Master's Voice: Advertising."

Rev. Jean C. de MENASCE, who has served as a pastor of a Negro parish in Washington, D. C., is at present director of a series of schools for social workers in the leading cities of Italy.

Jerome MELLQUIST, author and art critic, sends this report from Salzburg, Austria.

Max FISCHER, journalist and literary critic, is this term teaching a course on medieval literature at the New School for Social Research in New York.

James J. WEY is a graduate student at the Catholic University in Washington.

Rev. J. A. CORREIA is on the faculty of Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pa.

William V. SHANNON is assistant director of the Theodore Roosevelt project at MIT and author of the chapter on Massachusetts in Robert S. Allen's forthcoming book, "Our Sovereign State."

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